



***NI Children to Lapland
and Days to Remember Trust***



Welcome

As friends of the Charity's founder, Jack Rodgers, we have been Trustees of Northern Ireland Children to Lapland and Days to Remember Trust since its inception in 2008 and are delighted to have this opportunity to tell you a little bit about this very special Charity, about its aims and objectives and, basically, to let you know who we are and what we do.

At any given stage in Northern Ireland, there are approximately 1500 children suffering from a terminal or life limiting illness. Our very simple objective is to help alleviate the impact these illnesses have on these children and their families, by offering as many of them as possible events and magical experiences, primarily our incredible annual trip to Lapland, creating precious memories along the way.

Our Charity receives no Government or Lottery funding and must, therefore, be totally self financing, relying on crucial support from our Corporate Partners and the wider community. We run various fundraising events during the year and have a number of active local groups, who give enormous support to our Management Board.

We also receive wonderful assistance from the doctors and nurses from various Health and Social Care Trusts who, each year, nominate the children and voluntarily accompany them on our trips.

But we would love to do more, which is possibly where you may be able to help. If you would like to become involved, in whatever capacity (and you'll hopefully get loads of ideas from this brochure), we can promise you one of the most worthwhile and rewarding experiences of your life.

Nothing compares to the look of sheer joy on the faces of our children and their carers, when they meet Santa or play with the huskies and reindeer...it is truly a privilege to be involved.

Gerry Kelly (President)
Colin Barkley (Chairman)



Mission Statement

To give terminally ill, life limited and deserving children from across Northern Ireland a truly magical day, creating excitement and memories which they and their families will cherish forever.

In the beginning

In 2007, Co Antrim businessman, Jack Rodgers, became aware of a flight taking deserving children from Dublin to Lapland to meet Santa. So taken was Jack with the idea that he immediately saw the potential to do something similar for the children of Northern Ireland.

Doctors, paediatricians and psychologists unanimously recognised the enormous benefits of such a trip. For the children, there would be the excitement and anticipation of the trip, not to mention the day itself, while for the parents of, say, a terminally ill child, there would be the very special memories created, which would be so important in the days and months ahead.

As a result, the Northern Ireland Children to Lapland Trust was formed, in 2008, with the inaugural flight taking off the following December, in our own chartered 140 seat aircraft. The following year, it was

increased to a 180 seater and, since, 2012, it has been a 220 seat aircraft. In 2017, we took our 1000th child to Lapland.

Jack was, very deservedly, awarded an MBE in 2012, for his services to young people and charity over a period of 40 years.

Jack sadly passed away in March, 2019, but his legacy lives on.



Founder, Jack Rodgers, receiving his MBE, with his wife, Lynne, a Trustee of the Charity.



Our day in Lapland

It's an early start, when the big day finally arrives, with over 200 excited children and carers arriving at Belfast International Airport from around 5am, to be greeted by choirs and Disney characters galore.

For this one day, our aeroplane is, effectively, a flying hospital, given the amount of medical equipment and supplies on board. We are, of course, accompanied by a team of doctors and nurses, who bring with them intimate knowledge of the specific condition of every child on board. The authorities in Lapland are aware of the nature of our flight and an ambulance and the local hospital are on standby, although, thankfully, neither has been needed thus far.

For many of our children, this would be the first time that they had ever been on

an aeroplane or, indeed, out of Northern Ireland, due, in part, to the prohibitive cost of insurance. The 3 hour flight passes in a flash, with breakfast, letters to Santa, selection boxes distributed and faces painted, not to mention our Christmas 'singalong', where Rudolf and his red nose feature prominently!

For the last number of years, our port of call in Lapland has been Rovaniemi, which is about 800 kilometres north of Helsinki and which was described by Lonely Planet, no less, as the top Christmas destination IN THE WORLD!

Santa Park is a cavernous and truly magical winter wonderland, literally UNDER the Arctic Circle, with wide corridors, level floors and easily accessible toilet facilities, all extremely important for our group.



Within the resort, our families can enjoy a raft of different facilities. Everything is included, to allow them to enjoy the day to the full, without worrying about cost.

Inside, the children can enjoy an aerobatic display, bake gingerbread cookies with Mrs Claus, take a magic train ride and even qualify from Elf school. And, of course, the day culminates in a private meeting, for each family group, with Santa himself, in his personal grotto, with an official photograph commemorating the occasion.

We provide appropriate clothing for those who are able to enjoy the outside facilities, which are a major highlight of the day, because we bring in, exclusively for our group, huskies and reindeer and mini skidoos, to take the Christmas experience to another level.

But the day is far from over when we leave the resort! The energy of the kids is amazing and the return leg of the journey incorporates a seat decorating competition (otherwise known as 'total mayhem'), more food, more singing and more pressies.

It's normally around 10.30 or 11pm when we finally arrive back at BIA, after a long, tiring, but magical day...and 'magical' not only for the children...but 'magical' too for their families, for our doctors and nurses, for our volunteers and, last but not least, for the cabin and flight crew, who throw themselves enthusiastically in to the spirit of the day.



Days to Remember

We are always looking for more ways to give these very special kids something to remember... and have widened our charitable aims to allow us to do just that.

The particular illnesses of some incredibly brave children preclude them from our trip to Lapland...and so we now incorporate what we're simply calling **'Days to Remember'**.

We have already taken several family groups to Disneyland Paris, allowing one or both parents and, perhaps, a sibling to join in the fun...because, let's not forget, when a child is seriously ill, it affects the entire family unit.

We hope to do even more of these...and other...trips in the future.

The more money we raise, the more children we can help.



3 Steps to Christmas

Not even the dramatic impact of Covid 19 and its worldwide implications could dampen the commitment of the Charity to the children of Northern Ireland.

In the autumn of 2020, the inevitable decision was made that it would be impossible to make our annual trip to Lapland, but we were determined that the show must go on. Numerous ideas were considered and, ultimately, rejected, because the general restrictions and social distancing rules were ever changing.

What eventually evolved was what we called our **'3 Steps to Christmas'** campaign.

We asked the Health Trusts, with whom we liaise every year, to nominate, between them, 100 children, who they felt were particularly deserving.

- 1 Each child received a detailed personal letter from Santa.
- 2 They were then sent a video message, from the man himself, in his grotto in Lapland, explaining how they were to receive some very special additional presents this year.
- 3 With the help of the parents, each child then received personally chosen gifts, up to the value of £200, delivered by a team of volunteer elves, with additional gifts for their siblings!



Ambassador, Tommy Bowe, delivering presents to two very deserving Downpatrick brothers.



The general response was amazing...maybe it didn't quite have the magic of Lapland, but it was certainly something very special, in the most difficult of times... and we will hopefully be able to incorporate some of these initiatives in to our annual trip, when normal service is resumed.



What the families say

Over the years, we have received so many wonderful comments, from grateful families, which are hugely gratifying for all those involved. From the Management Board and our volunteers, to our Corporate Partners and Supporters and all the way through to those who make personal or business donations, it is so rewarding to see what the trip means to so many people... and the comments help to underline that it is not only the children themselves who benefit. The excitement ripples through the immediate family, of course, but let's not forget the wider family, from the grandparents, the aunts and uncles and cousins to the wider community, the neighbours and the work colleagues and the school friends, all of whom get to see the joy the trip creates.



The following is just a small sample of the comments which were included on a feedback questionnaire following our most recent trip, in 2019

"This Lapland experience has given special memories never to be forgotten."

Clara O'Brien, Cloughy

"This was the best day ever and I didn't want it to end."

Elizabeth Blair (aged 6), Killinchy

"It was beyond our wildest dreams ... a lifetime of memories."

Oonagh Blaney, Downpatrick

"This was a trip of a lifetime. I'll never be able to thank the team enough. My girls will remember this forever."

Ellen Gormley, Omagh

"This is the best day of my life."

Emma Anderson (aged 10), Bushmills

"An extraordinary experience for our family, especially at a time of grief. Invaluable memories made."

Gerald Courtney, Newry

"It was an experience I shared with my son that I'll treasure forever."

Sarah Lamont, Ballymena

"I love it and I don't want to go home. My dreams are coming true."

Teddy Weston (aged 8), Belfast

What the medical professionals say

Dr Mark Rollins MB FRCPCH MD DCH is a senior consultant paediatrician and a trustee of the charity:

"This is a unique charity which allows health and community care workers, based in all the Paediatric Departments and hospitals in Northern Ireland, to nominate the sick children they feel most deserve such an amazing treat."

The health teams are all aware of the significant burden on carers and families who look after their child's condition and needs on a daily basis. Doctors, nurses and allied health professionals give up of their own time to volunteer to ensure that these children can experience a magical time in a safe environment whilst not forgetting the boost the trip gives to their self confidence and mental well-being."

Of all the charities I have ever been involved with, NI Children to Lapland and Days to Remember Trust is definitely extra special."

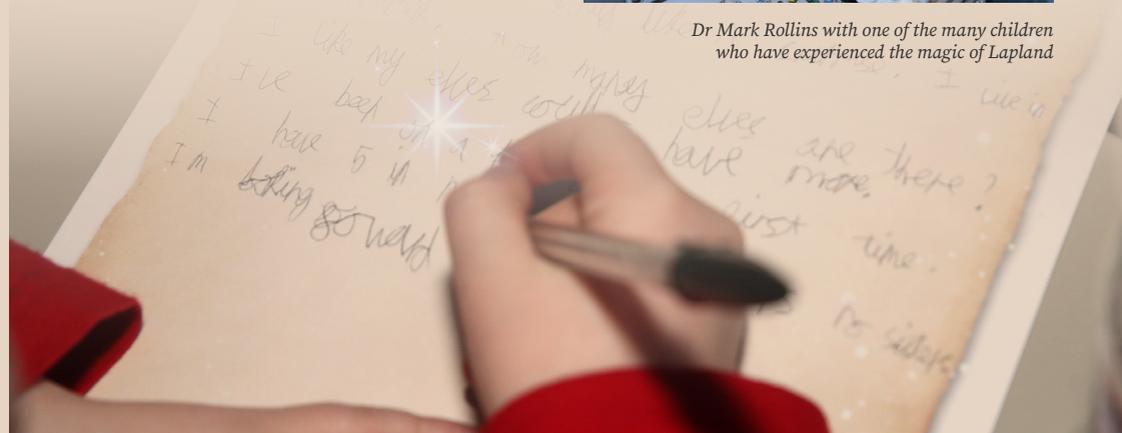
Dr. Michael Ledwith MB MRCP DCH:

"It is very difficult for people to understand what the lives of these families can be like, with constant appointments to and from doctors, constant medical problems, crises, emergencies and never ending requirements for hospital admission."

To have a day set aside, especially for them, where everything is laid on to fully experience the magic of Lapland, the magic of Christmas and meeting the real Santa is just terrific. Words can't describe how wonderful the day is for them and what a privilege it is for those of us who have the opportunity to come and look after the children on their special day"



Dr Mark Rollins with one of the many children who have experienced the magic of Lapland



Fundraising highlights

Over the years, our supporters have come up with all sorts of ways to raise funds for the Charity, from jail breaks to sponsored 'Walks to Scotland' and cabaret shows, from abseiling to the regular challenges taken on by the Carrick Cycle Club. We've had school Christmas jumper days and sparkling afternoon teas, Santa swims (and fun runs) and busking by the Ukelele Jam.

Opposite are just a few photographic memories...



Ethan Pollock (left) and Oliver Dickey (right)

In 2019, over 6 months of Wednesday evenings, Ethan Pollock, left and Oliver Dickey, who suffer from spina bifida and cerebral palsy respectively, swam the equivalent of the English Channel, or 1400 lengths of the Coleraine Grammar School pool. This was their way of saying 'thanks' for their trip to Lapland and their way of giving other children the same opportunity.



And 25 year old Josh Eastwood, from Donaghadee, completed the amazing challenge of running A MARATHON EVERY DAY in May 2021! Not all our fundraising is quite so taxing!



How you can help

We have been very fortunate over the years to have built up an extensive and loyal group of supporters, but we would love to do so much more and there are many different ways in which businesses, organisations and individuals can help.

The joy we create is priceless and every penny really does help. No matter how much or how little you are able to donate, we will make sure that it makes a difference.

Perhaps you could join us as a volunteer or join one of our regular sponsored events, be that a walk, a cycle or an abseil or nominate us as the charity to benefit if you are running a marathon or taking the plunge on a bungee or parachute jump.

Perhaps you and a group of friends could organise an event in your area, be that a coffee morning or cake sale.

If you're in business, why not nominate us as your company's chosen charity, or even sponsor a child today, with a donation of £750... or get your staff involved in a team building exercise, raising money, having fun and benefiting the business at the same time.

Schools have a great opportunity to help and, at the same time, teach children to think of others less fortunate. Why not have a non uniform day, or crazy sock day or Christmas jumper day and get mums and dads and grannies and grandads to sponsor their kids in this or some other form of challenge?

In the past, we have even benefited from bequests in wills!

We are always more than happy to meet with businesses, schools or individuals, to discuss whatever ideas or suggestions they may have and how we could, perhaps, add value in turning something from an idea into an actual fundraiser.

Please note that we are registered for Gift Aid, which can boost personal donations, from uk tax payers, by a further 25%.



Corporate Partners

Driven by the fact that we have to be entirely self financing, it has always been important for us to develop mutually beneficial relationships in the community, with businesses which share our ideals and objectives.

Some have been supporting us right from the start, while others have joined us more recently as 'Corporate Partners'. Their financial commitment, over a minimum period of three years and the income

that it guarantees, is vital in our financial planning, allowing us to look ahead with confidence.

Their support and generosity is hugely appreciated and makes a significant contribution to the Charity.

We would encourage anyone within the NICLT 'family' to support them, where possible, as they support us.



Ambassadors

We have recently appointed three extremely high profile local personalities, from the world of sport and show business, as Ambassadors.

All three have already shown a great willingness to get involved in what we do and their extensive social media following should ensure that we are constantly reaching new markets and potential new supporters.

TOMMY BOWE is a former Ulster, Ireland and British Lions Rugby player, who has, since retirement, forged a highly successful new career as a broadcaster and presenter.

MARISSA CALLAGHAN is the captain of the NI Ladies football team, which recently qualified for the 2022 European Championships and is a Girls' Participation Officer with the IFA.

NATHAN CARTER is undoubtedly Ireland's leading country singer, with no fewer than five no. 1 albums already to his credit.



Management Board

EXPERIENCED AND HIGHLY QUALIFIED MANAGEMENT BOARD

Although our Trustees have been involved in the Charity since its very earliest days, our Management Board has changed significantly since 2019, with considerable business acumen and specialist knowledge having been added, which we believe will serve us well as we deal with the various challenges faced by all charities.

We have just one employee, Fiona Williamson, who has 25 years experience of travelling to Lapland. Her previous career as an award winning tour operator and her fundraising expertise have proved invaluable. Every other member of our team gives his or her time freely, enthusiastically and entirely voluntarily.



We also have a number of local volunteer fundraising committees, most notably centred around Carrickfergus, the North coast and North Down.

As the children we help are from all four corners of Northern Ireland, we would love the opportunity to develop more small committees across Northern Ireland.

For more information on all that we do, visit our website, www.nichilrentolapland.com



Gerry Kelly
President and Trustee



Colin Barkley
Chairman and Trustee



Lynne Rodgers
Trustee



Dr Mark Rollins
Trustee



Jim Burke



Anna Kayes
Social Media



Frazer Evans, OBE



Janet McKay
PR



Diane Olphert
Treasurer



Fiona Williamson
General Manager

We would like to say a very sincere

‘THANK YOU’

**to everyone who has supported us over
the years, in whatever capacity...**

YOU REALLY DO HELP TO MAKE DREAMS COME TRUE!



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